Ashtekar Offered Visiting Chair in India

Abhay Ashtekar, Holder of the Eberly Family Chair in Physics and director of the Penn State Center for Gravitational Physics and Geometry, has been invited by the president of the Indian Academy of Sciences to fill the Sir C.V. Raman Chair. In addition to his time at the academy, the Chair also enables him to visit the Raman Research Institute in Bangalore, the Bose and Saha Institutes in Kolkatta, and the Inter-University Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune. Several of his former students now hold senior faculty positions at these institutions, and Ashtekar plans to use this opportunity to enhance their research collaborations.

The Raman Chair was established in 1972 by the Government of India, in honor of the founder of the Indian Academy of Sciences, to enable distinguished scientists to visit the academy and other scientific institutions in India. Sir Chandrasekhar Venkata Raman founded the academy in 1934 and served as its president until 1970. Born in 1888, Raman is best known for the "Raman effect" that bears his name. Also known as "Raman scattering," the phenomenon is observed in the scattering of light as it passes through a transparent medium.

Ashtekar joins a number of eminent scientists who have occupied the Raman Chair in the past. Previous chair holders include Nobel Laureate N. Bloembergen of Harvard University, Nobel Laureate B.S. Blumberg of the Fox Chase Cancer Center, Sir Hermann Bondi of Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, and Albert J. Libchaber of The Rockefeller University.

Ashtekar has been the director of the Institute for Gravitational Physics and Geometry since 1993, where his research focuses on Quantum Gravity and General Relativity. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, a Foreign Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences in India, and an Honorary Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences. He is chief editor for physics for the journal *Advances in Mathematical and Theoretical Physics*, and a managing editor for the *International Journal of Modern Physics-D*. 
Ashtekar has served as president of the American chapter of the Indian Physics Association, as chair of the Topical Group in Gravitation of the American Physical Society, and as the chair of a Special Emphasis Panel of the National Science Foundation. He has authored or edited five scientific books and more than 170 scientific papers.

Prior to joining the faculty at Penn State, Ashtekar held positions as professor, distinguished professor, and the Erastus Franklin Holden Professor of Physics at Syracuse University from 1984 to 1993. Prior to that he was professor and chair of gravitation at the University of Paris VI in France. He earned his doctoral degree in physics at the University of Chicago, and his bachelor’s degree in physics and mathematics at the University of Bombay in India.